Perspectives

Commander's **Connection**



Photo by Staff Sat. Stacy Simon

Col. Sam Angelella thanks NISH workers at a picnic Tuesday. The picnic was for those NISH employees responsible for the upkeep of Shaw grounds.

'Commander's Connection" is a link between Col. Sam Angelella, 20th Fighter Wing commander, and the Shaw community. Questions or concerns that can't be resolved through normal channels can be called in and recorded at 895-4611 or e-mailed to commandersconnection @shaw.af.mil.

Callers should leave a name and telephone number in case questions need clarification. Comments of general interest may be published in The Shaw Spirit.

Recently, I visited the base exchange and noticed the bathroom was unsanitary and the sink was broken. I went back two weeks later and there was no running water. I just wanted to make someone aware of this situation.

The 20th Civil Engineer Squadron created a work request to check the sink in the men's room at the BX. Repair materials were ordered and the work was completed. We also replaced the fixtures and associated components. Additionally, a regularly scheduled cleaning crew should ensure the bathroom's sanitation. Thank you for bringing this to our attention.

Happy Birthday Air Force

By James G. Roche Secretary of the Air Force and Gen. John P. Jumper Chief of Staff of the Air Force

In 56 years, the U.S. Air Force has earned its wings as the world's greatest air and space force. Our airmen and our technology are the best our nation have to offer, an achievement that flows from the contributions of every airman — whether active, guard, reserve, civilian or retired.

On Sept. 18, the anniversary of our creation, remember that through your integrity, selfless service and incomparable excellence, Americans find strength and confidence in the Air Force's ability to answer our nation's call, no matter when or where we're needed.

We celebrate the Air Force's birthday as we continue to support Operation Iraqi Freedom. Your tireless commitment, agility and professionalism are the foundation for integrating air and space power into a successful joint and coalition combat operation - one that has already crushed a tyrannical regime and is now helping to blaze the trail of freedom for millions in Iraq.

Yet, as we celebrate, we recognize this success is not without costs. We appreciate you and your families' extraordinary sacrifices. Let's take this special occasion to remember the airmen who made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure the security of America and the opportunity of freedom for those who have never before tasted liberty.

The Air Force's legacy has soared in its short history and greater opportunities are on the horizon — opportunities you'll meet with the same courage, commitment and confidence that define our first 56 years. America is proud of our Air Force, and Americans are proud of you. Happy Birthday!

War on terrorism requires focus, vigilance

By Gen. Hal M. Hornburg

Air Combat Command commander

LANGLEY AFB, Va. -- Following the events of Sept. 11, 2001, the United States and our allies began a campaign against aggression that still rages today--the Global War on Terrorism. Even today, the men and women of Air Combat Command remain instrumental in this fight. From Operations ENDURING FREEDOM to IRAQI FREEDOM to Operation NOBLE EAGLE closer to home, ACC has been an integral part in the ongoing effort to combat terrorism worldwide.

As we observe Patriot Day, marking the second anniversary of 9/11, I ask you to reflect on the events of that terrible day. Remember what you saw, how you felt and why America chose to fight back. Don't let the passing of time diminish your motivation or erode your commitment to fight our enemies wherever and whenever necessary. We must maintain our focus and do all that is possible to ensure a tragedy like 9/11 never happens again.

ACC men and women are still deployed around the world fighting terrorism. We played a major role in freeing the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, efforts that changed the world for the better. But now is not the time to stop. There is still much work to be done to ensure libertyloving people everywhere are free from the scourge of terrorism. We each play a continuing part in this effort and should be justifiably proud of our roles.

But we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. The threat is still out there. Whether at home or deployed, I ask you to stay motivated and vigilant. The war on terrorism requires all of our efforts for the foreseeable future. That said, I have no doubt our ACC airmen will successfully meet the challenge.

Thank you for all you do to keep America, and the rest of the world, safe. I am proud to serve with you.

The Shaw Spirit

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Use or lose: more ways than one

Lieutenant colonel tells why taking leave is important to us all

By Lt. Col. Lee Taylor 20th Equipment Maintenance Squadron commander

There's an old saying you should learn from the mistakes of others, because life is too short to make them all yourself. I'm hoping a few of you can learn from my mistakes and save yourself some grief down the road.

It's that time of year again -- "use or lose" season! Operation IRAQI FREEDOM no doubt has many of you deeply into "lose" status, whether you deployed or stayed here and fought the "Battle of Shaw" keeping the mission at home station on track.

Most folks will take advantage of the provisions in place to allow you to roll over the leave you couldn't take due to supporting combat operations, but no doubt some of you (the crusty old folks like me) won't bother to take leave because there is "just too much to get done, and I don't need leave." When I was a young lieutenant/captain I never lost leave, but like many of my peers, over time it became some sort of odd measure of "dedication to the mission" to lose some leave at the end of the year. I never let any of my people lose leave, not even the Chiefs who were crustier than me. But, I stopped worrying about it on a personal level. I've lost leave every year since 1997. Most years it was only a few days, but one year it was about 14 days. It wasn't that I didn't want to take leave, but as the years went by, and I got to be increasingly senior, there was always something too important or too complicated to be delegated. I had to stay and see it through -- and I considered the satisfaction of seeing it through to be well worth the lost leave.

If there were no perspective other than the Air Force to be considered, I would definitely stand by that judgment. There are, however, other perspectives to be considered.

When I was a kid back home, there was a cedar chest in the house I had never seen my parents open. Being a normally inquisitive kid, one day I decided to see what was in the cedar chest. The first thing I found was a small box full of odd-looking ribbons, badges, pictures and papers -- turns out it was my dad's records and mementos from his service in WWII. I didn't understand what any of it meant at the time, but I could see from the pictures of a young guy who looked a lot like my dad in a uniform that it was "military stuff". I hadn't been looking very long when my dad happened by, stuffed the things I had pulled out back in the box and firmly closed the lid of the chest. Curious as to what all of that stuff meant, I asked the cliché question "What did you do in the War, Dad?" His answer was short, and delivered in a tone that implied there was no need for follow on questions: "Walked through the woods and shot

Germans." It wasn't until years later, when I was stationed in Germany, that I got a little more out of him. He was a rifleman in the infantry, and judging by his ribbons and badges he was pretty good with a rifle. He landed at La Harve, France, and "marched" to Berlin. I found out he was in a unit attached to (Gen. George S.) Patton's Third Army. I always wondered if he ever saw Patton in person. I left home when I was 17. I spent a couple of summers back home in college, but since joining the Air Force, I've always been stationed a long ways from eastern Kansas. I seldom took enough leave to get all the way back there and spend time just talking with the folks. Driving just took too much time, and plane tickets were too expensive. Between August 1984 and Christmas 2001, I spent a total of about 20 days in my home town. We talked on the phone, but my dad was a little hard of hearing, and too bull-headed to admit it, so phone conversations were difficult, and usually brief. Christmas 2001 was the first time I had been home at Christmas in 9 years. I finally got the chance to spend some time just talking with my dad and found out the house he was born in was still standing. I wanted to go see

When Christmas 2002 came around, I was a new commander and had so many things to accomplish I just couldn't break away for the two weeks I had thought I would spend at home. Dad didn't much like going out in the cold anyway, so I pushed the trip back to this

it, but we had other commitments and didn't

get around to it that visit, so I resolved to go

back for Christmas the next year and see it

One Saturday in March my brother called. "Dad's in the hospital, they don't know if he is going to make it through the night." Dad had had a lot of health problems over the years, but this was a distinct departure -- he had been in "serious" condition, but never in "critical" condition. I jumped on a plane and got home as fast as I could. By the time I got there he had "turned the corner" and was recovering. He was weak, but able to carry on a conversation. We spent several hours talking about family history. I found out more about my dad in that two-day stay than I had in the

previous 42 years, but I forgot to ask if he ever saw Patton, and he was certainly in no shape to go see the house where he was born.

(Use|Lose

While he was getting checked out, the doctors found a small tumor behind his lung. It was a very aggressive form of cancer, but one generally easy to treat. He started in on a series of chemo and seemed to be handling it fairly well. I went home again for a few days in May after Dad's first round of chemo, but he needed to rest and had a house full of company so we didn't get much of a chance to talk. Dad continued his chemo and

seemed to be doing as well as could be expected. My brother had to do all of the driving to take dad to all of his appointments and talk with all of the doctors. We talked frequently over the summer about me going home and

taking care of dad for a while so my brother could get a little time off. With ESOHCAMP on the horizon, and other issues that needed my attention in the meantime, it looked like the week of Aug. 11 was the right time for the trip. I could take enough time to drive and take the family. Dad would be between rounds of chemo, and I would finally get a chance to ask him about Patton, go see where he was born, and talk about a number of other things I had always wanted to know.

On July 15 my brother called and said dad was back in the hospital. His lungs had started filling up again, but it didn't look too serious. We talked several times over the following days. On July 19, Dad started going down hill fast. I caught the first flight I could find and got to the hospital late that night. Dad was still conscious -- he recognized I was there, but he wasn't able to talk at all. I sat there through the night, thinking about all the things I wanted to ask him and realizing I would never get the chance. At 5:30 a.m. July 20, he slipped away. I'll never know if he ever saw Patton or a hundred other things I had always thought I would ask "someday." I really can't tell you how much I would give to be able to go back a few years and take all of my leave.

One day, no matter how good you are, or how many miracles you pull off, the Air Force will decide it no longer needs your services. If you keep your perspectives in order and are lucky, your family will not have reached that same conclusion at an earlier date. Take your leave and use it well.